

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /031 W

----- 012248

P R 291642Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7920

INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

AMEMBASSY ATHENS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

USMISSION NATO

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

USMISSION GENEVA

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 PARIS 07804

EXDIS

VIENNA FOR MBFR DEL

GENEVA FOR CSCE DEL

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, FR, US

SUBJECT: FRENCH POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC TRENDS

REF: (A) PARIS 33096; (B) ROME 7394

1. SUMMARY. UNCERTAINTY CONTINUES TO BE THE HALLMARK OF THE FRENCH POLITICAL SCENE, FUELED BY INCREASINGLY ALARMING RUMORS ABOUT PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S HEALTH. THE ENERGY CRISIS CONTINUES TO MAKE ITSELF FELT IN BOTH DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. WE BELIEVE THE FRENCH WILL PERSEVERE IN SEEKING TO STRENGTHEN EC POLITICAL COOPERATION AND THAT THEY WILL BE UNDAUNTED IN RESISTING ANY ORGANIC CONSULTATIVE LINK BETWEEN THE U.S. AND THE EC. HOWEVER, A COMBINATION OF EC PRESSURES AND DEFENSE REALITIES COULD MAKE THE FRENCH AMENABLE TO A PRACTICAL, NON-CODIFIED SOLUTION OUTSIDE THE FRAMEWORK OF A FORMAL US-EC DECLARATION. END SUMMARY.

2. DOMESTIC. DESPITE A MINISTERIAL SHAKEUP, THE GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO GIVE AN IMPRESSION OF UNCERTAINTY AND WEAKNESS. TO A LARGE DEGREE, THIS HAS RESULTED FROM RISING PUBLIC SPECULATION OVER PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S HEALTH, WHICH HAS INSPIRED THE OPPOSITION PARTIES TO INTENSIFY THEIR JOCKEYING FOR POSITION. IT HAS ALSO LED TO A CERTAIN DISARRAY WITHIN THE UDR, WHERE PRESIDENT POMPIDOU HAS FOUND IT INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TO MAINTAIN A FIRM LEADERSHIP ROLE, AND TO DISCREET CONTINGENCY PLANNING AMONG ALL THREE COALITION PARTIES. HE HAS DELIBERATELY AVOIDED NAMING A "DAUPHIN" WHICH WOULD MAKE HIM A LAME DUCK. WHILE PUBLIC ATTENTION TO LAST YEAR'S POLITICAL SCANDALS SEEMS TO HAVE ABATED, THE GOVERNMENT IS STILL PLAGUED BY A SENSE OF DRIFT, WHICH THE PRESIDENT'S NEW ENERGY MEASURES AND CALL FOR UNITY HAVE DONE LITTLE TO ALLEVIATE.

3. BOTH GOVERNMENT ECONOMISTS AND BUSINESS ANALYSTS IN FRANCE NOW SEE THE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AS LESS BLEAK THAN THEY DID AT THE TURN OF THE YEAR. THE THREAT OF AN OIL SHORTAGE HAS VANISHED. WHILE THE FUTURE IS STILL CLOUDED BY THE UNCERTAINTY HANGING OVER THE AUTOMOBILE INDUSTRY,

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CHANCES OF A RECESSION HAVE LESSENED. ON THE OTHER HAND, INFLATION HAS INTENSIFIED AND A NEW SERIES OF MEASURES WAS ANNOUNCED MARCH 20 TO COPE WITH IT. EVEN THE FINANCE MINISTER HAS PUBLICLY RESIGNED HIMSELF TO PRICE INCREASES DURING 1974 IN THE TEN PERCENT RANGE, WHILE OUTSIDE OBSERVERS PUT THE FIGURE FROM TWO TO FIVE PERCENTAGE POINTS HIGHER.

4. WHILE THE DANGER OF MAJOR UNEMPLOYMENT HAS EASED, CONTINUING INFLATION AND CONCERN IN SOME SECTORS OVER JOB SECURITY AND PROTECTION OF PURCHASING POWER HAVE CAUSED A SENSE OF UNEASINESS AMONG WORKERS. ALTHOUGH THIS HAS NOT YET RESULTED IN GREATER RANK-AND-FILE MILITANCY, ORGANIZED LABOR REMAINS FIRM IN ITS REFUSAL TO ACCEPT A DISPROPORTIONATELY HEAVY SHARE OF THE AUSTERITY BURDEN. IN ADDITION TO RECENT STRIKES BY PUBLIC

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
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AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
UFHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 9510
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USMISSION NATO
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY VIENNA
USMISSION GENEVA
AMCONSUL LYON
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AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

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EXDIS

UTILITIES AND BANK CLERKS, A TREND IS DEVELOPING TOWARDS WILDCAT BOTTLENECK STRIKES, WHERE A RELATIVELY FEW STRATEGICALLY PLACED WORKERS BRING AN ENTIRE OPERATION TO A HALT. WITH THE GOVERNMENT SEEKING TO INSURE THAT
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WAGE SETTLEMENTS IN FIRST HALF OF YEAR DO NOT EXCEED RISE IN COST OF LIVING, THERE ARE SIGNS OF SOME DETERIORATION IN LABOR CLIMATE.

5. FOREIGN AND DEFENSE RELATIONS. OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS, FRENCH ACTIONS HAVE BROUGHT INTO CLEAR FOCUS THE FUNDAMENTAL CONFLICT BETWEEN FRENCH AND US VISIONS OF EUROPE AND OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY AND THE US. FRENCH RHETORIC AND BEHAVIOR IN THIS QUARTER DEMONSTRATED THAT THE GAULLIST THRUST FOR INTERNATIONAL POWER AND INDEPENDENCE, RELATIVELY VEILED SINCE 1969, STILL OCCUPIES A MAJOR ROLE IN FRENCH POLICY.

6. FRANCE IS CONCERNED OVER WHAT IT PERCEIVES AS A US-SOVIET CONDOMINIUM THAT RISKS SACRIFICING SECURITY OF WESTERN EUROPE, AND IS OBSESSIVELY PREOCCUPIED WITH WHAT IT VIEWS AS US ATTEMPTS TO PERPETUATE A POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC HEGEMONY OVER EUROPE. THESE PERCEPTIONS PLUS THEIR OWN OBJECTIVES FOR "EUROPEAN IDENTITY" AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EC LEAD THE FRENCH TO RESIST US EFFORTS TO FORMALIZE THE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC INTERDEPENDENCE OF EUROPE AND THE US. IN ADDITION, GOF ATTEMPTS TO COPE WITH DOMESTIC PROBLEMS HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO A STRIDENT NEO-GAULLIST TONE IN THE CONDUCT OF FOREIGN RELATIONS. WHILE THEY MAY NOT ENTIRELY BELIEVE THEIR OWN RHETORIC, THE CONSTANT FRENCH HARPING ON "CONDOMINIUM" AND CRITICISM OF THE US ARE USEFUL ARGUMENTS TO SENSITIZE EUROPEAN PUBLIC OPINION TO THE FRENCH VIEW OF AN INDEPENDENT AND CONFEDERAL EUROPE (UNDER FRENCH TUTELAGE), WHICH IN TURN WILL STRENGTHEN FRENCH NATIONAL INFLUENCE AND APPEAL TO THE FRENCH PUBLIC'S NATIONAL PRIDE. THE WASHINGTON ENERGY CONFERENCE WAS VIEWED BY THE FRENCH AS A SHOWDOWN WITH THE US IN WHICH FRANCE RISKED POLITICAL ISOLATION IN TAKING A CLEAR AND UNAMBIGUOUS STAND. THEIR REACTION WAS A FUNCTION OF THE CHALLENGE THEY PERCEIVED AT A TIME WHEN THE FRENCH DOMESTIC SITUATION DEMANDED A SHOW OF RESOLUTION, INDEPENDENCE AND COURAGE.

7. THE ENERGY CRISIS AND THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT

BROUGHT TO A HEAD THE ISSUE OF US-EC CONSULTATION. THE
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FRENCH FIND THEIR EUROPEAN PARTNERS RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA THAT "EUROPE" CARVE OUT A DISTINCT RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ARABS. THE EC-EIGHT SEEM TO DISAGREE ONLY ON THE DEGREE OF DISTINCTNESS FROM THE US THAT THIS RELATIONSHIP SHOULD TAKE, NOT ON ITS NECESSITY OR BASIS IN GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY. THIS PERCEPTION ENCOURAGES THE FRENCH IN THEIR PURSUIT OF EC INDEPENDENCE OF THE US. TO THE FRENCH, THE WEC WAS ONLY THE LATEST OF SEVERAL US EFFORTS TO SUBORDINATE THE INTERESTS OF FRANCE AND OF EUROPE TO THOSE OF THE US. THE MORE WE PRESS FOR A CODIFIED OR ORGANIC CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM, THE MORE THE FRENCH ARE LIKELY TO RESIST IN THE HOPE THAT TIME WILL CONFIRM TO THE EIGHT THAT THE US IS INDEED SEEKING TO IMPOSE ITS WILL ON THE EUROPEANS, THAT THE FRENCH STANCE OF INDEPENDENCE FROM THE US IS THE ONLY WAY TO ACHIEVE A UNIQUELY EUROPEAN IDENTITY. THE FRENCH WILL WISH TO AVOID, HOWEVER, BECOMING TOTALLY ISOLATED FROM BOTH THE EIGHT AND THE US.

8. THE CRUX OF THE MATTER FOR US POLICY IS WHETHER THE FRENCH POSITION ON THE FUNDAMENTAL EC-US RELATIONSHIP IS RIGID, OR WHETHER THERE IS ROOM FOR COMPROMISE. IN OUR VIEW, THE FRENCH WILL REFUSE TO ACCEPT AN "ORGANIC CONSULTATIVE LINK" BETWEEN THE US AND THE EC. HOWEVER, WE DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE FRENCH MIGHT BE AMENABLE TO COMPROMISE ON THE US-EC CONSULTATION ISSUE, IF IT COULD BE DONE IN PRACTICE WITHOUT PROCLAIMING IT IN A FORMAL DECLARATION OR DOCUMENT, AND PROVIDED THAT FRANCE WAS SATISFIED THAT THE CONSULTATIVE ARRANGEMENT DID NOT GIVE THE US A VETO OVER EC DECISIONS.

9. THE FRENCH ARE UNDOUBTEDLY PREPARING FOR THEIR TURN IN THE EC CHAIR STARTING JULY 1. THEY MAY BE WORKING ON A MAJOR INITIATIVE, MOVING TOWARD A EUROPEAN UNION ALONG LOOSE, CONFEDERAL LINES CONSISTENT WITH EARLIER GAULLIST VISION, AS A CENTERPIECE FOR THIS SIX-MONTH TENURE -- PERHAPS AS JOBERT OUTLINED TO THE ITALIANS (REF B). SUCH A MOVE MIGHT COMPLICATE US EFFORTS TO WORK OUT A

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

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INFO AMEMBASSY ANKARA

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EXDIS

CONSULTATIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE EC BY DIVERTING
EUROPEAN ATTENTION FROM THE TRANSATLANTIC RELATIONSHIP
TO EUROPEAN UNION. HOWEVER, THE FRENCH ABILITY TO
ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS WHEN THEY ASSUME THE EC LEADERSHIP

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FUNCTION WILL CONTINUE TO BE LIMITED BY THE ATTITUDES OF
THE OTHER EIGHT, AND ESPECIALLY BY THE UNCERTAINTY

CAUSED BY THE UK'S INTENTION TO RENEGOTIATE ITS TERMS OF ENTRY.

10. THE FRENCH ARE UNDER NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT THE EXTENT OF THEIR DEPENDENCE ON THE US FOR THEIR OWN SECURITY. THEY ARE QUITE PREPARED TO FOLLOW A DECLARATORY POLICY OF "DIGNITY" AND "INDEPENDENCE," BUT THEY WILL SEEK TO AVOID RUPTURE OF THE ESSENTIAL US/NATO DEFENSE LINK. THE FRENCH BELIEVE THAT US TROOPS ARE IN EUROPE FOR VITAL US INTERESTS, AND WILL REMAIN OR DEPART AS A FUNCTION OF US PERCEPTIONS OF ITS OWN NATIONAL INTERESTS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE BETTING THAT WE SEE OUR SECURITY INTERESTS TIED TO EUROPE AND THUS WILL RETAIN OUR TROOPS AND NUCLEAR COVER.

11. FRANCE'S INITIATIVES OF LAST YEAR REGARDING THE "PARTICULAR CHARACTER" OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE HAVE FADED IN THE LAST THREE MONTHS. THIS IS PROBABLY BECAUSE THE GOAL OF FORCING THE EUROPEANS TO THINK ABOUT THEIR FUTURE PROBLEM WAS ACHIEVED BY FRENCH "POSING OF THE QUESTION" OF EUROPEAN DEFENSE. FURTHER, THE FRENCH KNOW FULL WELL A EUROPEAN DEFENSE FORCE IS UNREALISTIC FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE BECAUSE OF THE INDISPENSABILITY OF THE US NUCLEAR UMBRELLA, THE GERMAN PROBLEM AND THE LACK OF A EUROPEAN DECISION-MAKING BODY. FURTHERMORE, FRENCH EMPHASIS ON THE SUBJECT WAS A NEEDLESS IRRITANT IN FRENCH-SOVIET RELATIONS.

12. DESPITE THE GOOD ATMOSPHERICS OF THE BREZHNEV-POMPIDOU SUMMIT AT PITSUNDA, THERE CONTINUE TO BE BASIC DIFFERENCES OF VIEW BETWEEN MOSCOW AND PARIS. THE FRENCH FOCUS ON CONSTRUCTION OF THE EC REMAINS DISQUIETING TO THE SOVIETS, WHOSE EUROPEAN POLICY IS CENTERED ON THE CSCE. THE FRENCH HAVE SHOWN LITTLE INCLINATION TO SUPPORT SOVIET VIEWS ON ISSUES IN DISPUTE AT THE GENEVA CONFERENCE, WHILE THEIR CONTINUED RETICENCE IN JOINING IN MEASURES SUCH AS MBFR, THE CCD, THE LTB AND THE NPT, AS WELL AS OTHER DISARMAMENT INITIATIVES, HAS LIMITED FRANCO-SOVIET COOPERATION. THE FRENCH CONTINUE
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TO FIND SOVIET CONSULTATION INADEQUATE, THE SOVIET MILITARY BUILD-UP THREATENING, AND SOVIET RELATIONS WITH THE US INHIBITING. NEVERTHELESS, THEY CONTINUE TO SEEK AT LEAST A FACADE OF GOOD RELATIONS WITH MOSCOW TO MAXIMIZE THEIR POLITICAL INFLUENCE, MAINTAIN A FAVORABLE ATMOSPHERE FOR PURSUING ECONOMIC BENEFITS AND TO KEEP THE FRENCH COMMUNISTS IN CHECK.

13. IN ASIA, ALTHOUGH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S TRIP TO

JAPAN APRIL 23-26 IS OFF, JOBERT IS GOING IN HIS PLACE
AND CAN BE EXPECTED TO LOBBY FOR A BILATERAL JAPANESE-EC
DECLARATION. PRESIDENT POMPIDOU, WE ARE TOLD, IS MORE
OPPOSED THAN EVER TO THE IDEA OF A TRILATERAL DECLARA-
TION. JOBERT WILL ALSO VISIT SEOUL AND MANILA ON HIS
TRIP.

14. FOREIGN ECONOMIC RELATIONS. THE EXTERNAL ECONOMIC
AREA CONTINUES TO BE DOMINATED BY THE ENERGY PROBLEM.
HIGHER ENERGY PRICES AND OUR PROPOSALS FOR AN INTERNA-
TIONAL EFFORT TO DEAL WITH THEM ARE VIEWED BY THE FRENCH
AS CONSTRAINTS ON THEIR FREEDOM OF ACTION. THEY WILL
CONSEQUENTLY CONTINUE TO KEEP THEIR DISTANCE FROM THE
WORK OF THE ENERGY COORDINATING GROUP. THEY HAVE AGREED,
HOWEVER, TO JOIN IN THE EFFORTS OF THE OECD WORKING
GROUPS, AS LONG AS THE COSMETIC APPEARANCE OF INDEPEND-
ENCE FROM THE ECG IS MAINTAINED. IN WORKING GROUPS OUT-
SIDE THE OECD, THE FRENCH MAY TRY TO EXERT THEIR INFLU-
ENCE THROUGH OTHER EC DELEGATES. WHILE FRANCE CAN BE
EXPECTED TO SNIPE AT THE ECG, POSING AS CHAMPIONS OF THE
THIRD WORLD AND AS FRIENDS OF THE OIL PRODUCERS, THEY DO
HAVE AN INTEREST IN HAVING THEIR OPINIONS HEARD AND CON-
SIDERED. THEY ARE IMPORTANT OIL CONSUMERS AND MANY
FRENCH OFFICIALS, AT LEAST AT THE TECHNICAL LEVEL, ACCEPT
THE IDEA THAT INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO SOLVE ENERGY
PROBLEMS IS ESSENTIAL.

15. THE FRENCH ARE ESPECIALLY ANXIOUS LEST THE WEC
FOLLOW-UP DILUTE WHAT THEY CONSIDER TO BE THEIR

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FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
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EXDIS

PRIVILEGED POSITION WITH THE ARABS. HOWEVER, THEY ARE CLEARLY DISILLUSIONED WITH PROSPECTS FOR NEAR-TERM PAY-OFF FROM BILATERAL DEALS WITH THE OIL PRODUCERS. THE FRENCH HAVE FAILED TO OBTAIN ANY PREFERENTIAL ACCESS TO
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MAJOR OIL SUPPLIES OVER THE PAST THREE MONTHS, AND THEY APPEAR SURPRISED THAT THE PRODUCERS HAVE NOT GIVEN THEM DISCOUNTS ON POLITICAL GROUNDS. WE EXPECT THAT, OVER THE COMING MONTHS, THE FRENCH WILL ACCORDINGLY DOWNPLAY BILATERALISM, SEEKING TO FOLLOW UP THE EC INITIATIVE TOWARD THE ARABS TO PUSH OTHER INITIATIVES IN THE EC (PARTICULARLY IN ENERGY), WHILE COOPERATING WITH THE OECD AND MAKING THEIR VIEWS KNOWN TO THE ECG. THEY WILL CONTINUE TO REMAIN ALOOF FROM THE ECG, HOWEVER, AND WILL DELAY FULLER PARTICIPATION IN THE EFFORT OF INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION UNTIL THE ECG HAS WOUND UP ITS WORK. FOR THE MEANTIME, THE FRENCH WILL SEEK TO DOWNPLAY THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE WORK GOING FORWARD IN THE OECD AND THE REST OF THE ENERGY ACTION PROGRAM.

16. CONCLUSION. IN GENERAL, WE EXPECT FRANCE TO REMAIN FIRM IN PURSUING ITS NATIONAL OBJECTIVES IN THE MONTHS AHEAD. IT HAS STAKED OUT A POSITION WHICH IT BELIEVES

IS ONE OF "INDEPENDENCE AND DIGNITY," TO USE JOBERT'S
WORDS. IT CAN BE EXPECTED TO PERSEVERE IN STRIVING TO
BUILD A EUROPE WHICH WILL BE STRONG ENOUGH TO ACT AS A
SPRINGBOARD FOR FRENCH POLICY, YET NOT SO STRONG THAT
IT IMPINGES ON FRENCH SOVEREIGNTY. IN DOING SO, IT WILL
CONTINUE TO PROD AND CAJOLE ITS EC PARTNERS, REASSURE
THE SOVIETS, COURT THE THIRD WORLD, REACH OUT TO THE
JAPANESE AND STAND UP TO US.
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